

FLEET Focus

Past, present Reuben James crews reunite, celebrate

By **Ens. Scott Kozink**
USS REUBEN JAMES

On Oct. 31, 1941, the U.S. Navy destroyer Reuben James (DD 245) while conducting convoy escort duties was torpedoed off the coast of Ireland by a German U-boat. One hundred fifteen of her 156 Sailors lost their lives on that cold October day. This was the first U.S. Navy ship to be sunk from hostile action during World War II.

On May 4, 2001 survivors of DD-245 and members of her successor USS Reuben James (DE 153), a World War II destroyer escort, met in Albany, N.Y. USS Reuben James' (FFG 57) Signalman 2nd Class (SW) Andre Perez attended the reunion and shared the unique opportunity to reflect on the history of the Navy and WWII with these aging veterans.

This was a bittersweet reunion for the 40 plus retired Sailors who attended. The re-acquaintance of friends, fond memories of camaraderie and stories of life at sea were darkened by thoughts of the men who lost their lives when the first Reuben James was sunk.

Perez was more than happy to take time from his vacation in West Haverstraw, N.Y. to be at the Reuben James reunion in Albany. The officers and crew of the current Reuben James sent a letter from the commanding officer, ship's ballcaps, welcome aboard packages and ship's stickers to Perez who delivered them to the

Reuben James veterans.

"We will be forever grateful for your kindness. Signalman Perez arrived at our business meeting with hats and ballcaps. I will treasure the letter and the picture of the ship (FFG 57) you sent me and it will reside in a prominent place in my memorabilia. SM2 Perez's arrival was the absolute highlight or our re-union and we thank you from the bottom of a bunch of 'old timers' hearts," said retired Signalman 1st Class Tack King.

"When I arrived, everyone swarmed me and started asking questions and thanking me for coming," said Perez. "They all wanted to know how the ship and her crew were doing here in Hawaii. It was overwhelming hearing stories from the veterans and seeing their emotions and deep sense of pride in their country and in what they had done. I will never forget the stories they told and the people I met," added Perez.

"We are very fortunate that SM2 Perez could join the survivors of the Reuben James' at their recent reunion. It was an opportunity to say thank you to some very courageous Sailors whose service in World War II is why we are able to enjoy the liberties and freedoms we have today," stated Cmdr. Carl Cramb, commanding officer, USS Reuben James.

The ships that have borne the name Reuben James were named in honor of Boatswain Mate Reuben James. Born in Delaware



CW04 Jay Lorenz photo

SM2(SW) Andre Perez (left middle) and the reuben James Sailors who attended the reunion in Albany on May 4.

in 1776, he joined the Navy and served his country on several ships including the frigate, USS Constellation for 30 years. He volunteered to serve with Lt. Stephan Decatur and entered the harbor of Tripoli in an attempt to burn the USS Philadelphia, which had run aground, so pirates would

not capture the ship during the Barbary Wars. According to Folklore, Reuben James saved the life of Lt. Decatur and was seriously injured in the altercation.

The former Sailors of USS Reuben James and Boatswain Mate Reuben James served their country with fortitude, temper-

ance and zeal. Their lives, past and present, truly embody the tenets of this great nation.

Today's Reuben James Sailors proudly carry on the tradition of dedication and service to country started more than 60 years ago aboard the first two vessels named in his honor.

CNP: Change in culture needed to sail through 21st century

By **J03 Terrance Medina**
NAVAL STATION ROOSEVELT ROADS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Norb Ryan visited Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, recently to deliver a message - a message about how the Navy needs to change its culture to keep "seasoned veterans" on the job and to remain on the lookout for fresh talent.

"We need your continued help with recruiting," said Ryan. "We know that we need to get good, young people out in the recruiting business.

"We've spent millions of dollars making sure that every recruiter has a laptop, a cellular phone and a car, but what we really need is our best people to get into recruiting and we prefer E-4s and E-5s.

"When it comes time for shore duty, think of recruiting and think of the

'Sailorization' process, either as a recruiter, recruit division commander or a service school instructor."

Ryan went on to say that being involved with Sailorization is not just good for the Navy, but good for the Sailor, too. Advancement boards for chiefs now take a close look at how much time Sailors have spent recruiting and training other Sailors, in addition to their sea time.

This is just part of what Ryan called a "change in culture" - the first step away from the "draw down" mentality of the '90's.

In the '90's, everyone believed there were more people willing to serve the Navy than the Navy needed which led to a spiraling decline in retention, according to Ryan.

"We're determined to change that culture," said Ryan, "and it won't change be-

cause Norb Ryan or Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Jim Herdt wants it to change, but if our leadership sticks with it, it will change and it will make us better."

But policy changes and number crunching aside, Ryan, the son of a Pennsylvania coal miner, said that the most important way to keep people in the Navy is the same thing that kept him in the Navy - making sure they love their job.

"Most of the people who stay in the Navy stay in because they love what they do," said Ryan. "They love the sense of mission, the sense of service that they get. They like the excitement, they like the variety.

"If I had stayed in my own hometown, I wouldn't have been as challenged as I've been, seen what I've seen and I certainly wouldn't have been able to serve with the

types of people that I've met in the Navy," he said. "Those experiences are vital to shaping the future of both our country and our Sailors," said Ryan.

"Responsibility - you get it in the Navy," said Ryan. "You get what I call a Ph.D. from the Navy - positive habit development, and that will serve you the rest of your life.

That's what almost any successful person in civilian society will tell you they got out of the Navy - positive habit development. You understand that you have to start with self and self-discipline," he continued.

"You learn things like perseverance, and you learn the importance of teamwork - things that people can go a lifetime without figuring out, you learn at a very young age in the military," explained Ryan.

Two Buffalo chiefs retire



YNC (SS) Larry Laskowski photo

USS Buffalo (SSN 715) recently held a retirement ceremony for two submarine chiefs at the Parche Memorial MMC(SS) Ronald Werner and ETC (SS/DV) Gary Hockett retired from the Navy with a collective 40 years of submarine service.

Pacific Fleet Surface Force gets new commander, Moore retires

By **J03(SW) Jason Heavner**
SURFPAC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

On May 18, a change of command ceremony was held at Pier 2 between USS Valley Forge (CG 50) and USS Tarawa (LHA 1) at Naval Station San Diego.

Vice Adm. Edward Moore Jr. passed on his duties and responsibilities to Vice Adm. Timothy W. LaFleur who assumed the role of Commander, Naval Surface Force, Pacific Fleet.

After 38 years of Naval service, including his first five years as an enlisted Sailor, Moore retired before a crowd of more than 500 people. Moore's family, friends and various officers and Sailors were on hand to witness this time-honored event.

One noteworthy officer on hand was Adm. Thomas B. Fargo, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Naval Pacific Fleet, who said, "I've been

impressed with the Pacific Fleet surface force during the past several years because they were willing to recognize the changing dynamics of decreasing retention and inadequate reenlistments within the force," said Fargo. "They immediately took action, stepped up the initiative of handling these issues and produced tangible results," added the San Diego native.

Despite the overcast weather at the ceremony, the illustrious career of Vice Adm. Moore was reflected brightly by Fargo's words as he said, "You've made a lasting contribution to this nation and all of us are awed by your 38 years of accomplishments as well as your compassion for all the Sailors in this great Navy and your loyal dedication to duty. I applaud you."

Moore bid farewell, read his retirement orders and officially passed over the helm. For his final speech,

he told the commanding officers of the surface force as well as commodores, to "achieve and maintain combat readiness, improve the material condition of your ship - leave it better than you found it, and most of all, take care of your people."

As LaFleur officially assumed command, he said, "I remember as a young lieutenant, the SURFPAC commander was a grouchy old guy across the bay; now I am him."

Jokes aside, the Oak Park, Ill. native added, "It's quite an honor to take on this responsibility and since Moore set the standard during his tenure here, they're big shoes to fill in this position and I'm proud to be the one to do just that."

LaFleur is the thirteenth Pacific Fleet surface force commander since the position was introduced in 1975.

Vice Adm. LaFleur identifies top priorities at SNA symposium

By **CNSP Public Affairs**

People, readiness and communication.

That was the primary message of Vice Adm. Tim LaFleur's speech kicking off the Surface Naval Association's West Coast Symposium last week at Naval Station San Diego.

Speaking to an audience of officers, Sailors and Navy retirees, LaFleur, who relieved Vice Adm. Ed Moore on May 18 as Commander, Naval Surface Force Pacific Fleet (COMNAVSURF-PAC), said he was extremely proud to be a surface warfare officer and honored to be the leader of a community with such a rich heritage.

"The surface warfare community has a 226-year tradition of heroes," he said. "Our work ethic and culture are at the heart and soul of what makes today's Navy the greatest the world has ever known. You are a part of that long line of heroes, and you should be very proud of that. I know I am," he said.

Throughout his tour as COMNAVSURFPAC, LaFleur said people will be his top priority.

"We have tremendous ships, with tremendous technological capability, throughout the force. But the stark reality is that they are nothing but inanimate objects without the Sailors who man them. It is their training, their know-how and their professional-

ism that allow our Navy to accomplish what it does when we're forward deployed around the world."

LaFleur told the audience that the Navy must be an "employer of choice" if it is going to continue to be the world's best.

"We are winning the war for talent," he said. "Our first term retention numbers are up and continuing to improve. But it is going to take leadership up and down the chain of command if we are going to reach the Navy wide goal of 32 percent. Why do two ships of the same class in a battle group have such drastically different retention/attrition numbers during a deployment? It's all about leadership."

"Readiness, said LaFleur, will

also be a top priority." "There are lots of different parts to readiness. We have to make sure we're asking the right questions. For example, when we CASREP our equipment, are we looking to see what's the root cause of that equipment to fail? Where is the real problem?"

On the manning part of readiness, he said he wants to make sure the force not only has the numbers of Sailors it needs, but also the right mix of NECs.

"There is a good news story to tell in the area of manning. We have gone from being about 85 percent manned just four years ago to nearly 100 percent manned today. But we also must pay attention to ensuring we have the right people

with the right training in the job at the right time. That's critical."

LaFleur also said that taking care of Sailors and combat readiness were impossible without good communication.

"There needs to be good communication up and down the chain of command and we need be talking within the surface force. I know good communications starts with being a good listener and I'll certainly have an open ear at headquarters," he said.

In closing, LaFleur equated the Navy to a \$90 billion business, emphasizing the point that "good businesses have good leaders."

"If we're going to improve, we must measure and share our best practices," he said.